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Inventory for

Manuscript Collection
MS - 109

William King Papers

1800-1849

by
Elisabeth Meier
August 2019

½ box
.2 linear feet
Accession no. 69.3449, 71.39.2

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Abstract

William King (1768-1852)
Papers, 1800-1849

½ box

Ship owner, farmer, merchant, and politician from Bath, Maine

Contains correspondence, business accounts, commissions, and other documents related to Governor William King of Bath, Maine. Business papers include material from ships owned by King, as well as records of his work with the Bath Bank, as a Collector of Customs, and negotiating French indemnity claims for vessels seized in the Quasi-War. Letters are from a variety of correspondents. There is little personal material in the collection.

Organized in one series

Language: English

Gift of Emile E. Bouchard, Jane A. Goodman, and others.

MS-109. Accession #69.3449, 71.39.2.

Finding aid (folder level control) in repository.

Added entries—persons:

King, William (1768-1852)

Added entries—corporate bodies (including vessels):

Ganges (ship : Wiscasset, 1810)

Osiris (ship : Topsham, 1796)

Porter & King (Bath, Me)

Added entries—key terms:

Bath (ME) – Banks and banking

Customs administration – Officials and employees

Maine – Politics and government

Privateering

Ships – owners

United States – History – 1797-1801

Acquisition

This collection consists of at least two separate gifts. Emile E. Bouchard donated a group of 15 letters, found in the attic of a house in Topsham, in 1969. Jane A. Goodman donated a deed signed by William King in 1972. Unnumbered documents may have been donated by Mrs. John Kiernan in memory of L. Earle LeMont in 1980.

Restrictions

There are no restrictions on this collection. Staff supervision is required.

Physical Condition

The documents are largely in good condition. Some are fragile, have torn along folds, or are yellowing.

Processing Notes

These documents were grouped together early in the library's organization and given the collection number M-6. This was later re-named to MS-109. These documents have therefore been processed together.

Related Materials

Another group of William King's papers, including both accounts and correspondence, is in SM 28/17. This includes letters from many of the same correspondents found in this collection. A few more papers related to William King can be found in SM 38/4, SM 79/18, and OM 3/17.

The Maine Historical Society has a substantial collection of William King's papers, Coll. 165, as well as several related collections. The Maine State Library also has a collection of material from William King.

Historical Note

William King, a merchant, ship-owner, and first governor of Maine, was born in Scarborough in 1768. He moved to Topsham in the early 1790s, where he worked in a sawmill before beginning a partnership with his brother-in-law, Benjamin J. Porter, as Porter & King. King quickly developed a diverse set of business interests, including stores, lumber mills, a cotton mill (the first in Brunswick), and shipping.

King moved to Bath in 1800, where he established himself as a leading citizen and businessman. He operated a sizeable fleet of ships in the West Indies and transatlantic trades. He also began investing in farmland, growing potatoes for export in the north end of Bath and acquiring significant acreage in Franklin County. He helped establish Bath's first bank in the early nineteenth century. Socially, he was a founder of the South Church and the Masonic Lodge.

William King was also deeply involved in politics. He was elected to the Massachusetts legislature circa 1795 and served until 1820. During the War of 1812, he was commissioned as a Major General of the Massachusetts militia and organized local brigades with distinction. He maintained the title 'General' for the remainder of his life. King was also instrumental in arranging Maine's separation from Massachusetts, which propelled him to become Maine's first governor. He later received federal appointments as a treaty negotiator with Spain in 1822, and as the customs collector for Bath in the 1830s. Locally, King also served as the Justice of the Peace. He died in Bath in 1852.

Scope and Content Note

This collection contains scattered documents from many facets of William King's life and career. His business interests are principally represented by accounts, insurance documents, and other records of four of his ships, *Alexander*, *Asia*, *Ganges*, and *Osiris*. None of these vessels are completely documented here: the most complete set of records is from a single voyage of the *Osiris* in 1800, when the vessel was seized by French privateers during the Quasi-War and later recaptured by her American crew. A deposition by John Ramsey, a farmer

employed by William King, addresses King's farming business and charges that he smuggled potatoes during the War of 1812.

A number of King's civic and political activities are represented, including commissions to local and federal posts, accounts from his tenure as a collector of customs, material from the Bath Bank, and records of his role in securing indemnity payments from the French for damage to Maine shipping during the Quasi-War. Material about Maine's statehood is limited to a document negotiating the State of Massachusetts' claims to land in Maine.

Correspondence in this collection is scattered, but touches on a variety of King's business, political, and personal interests. Personal material is limited to a single land deed and report cards for King's son, Cyrus, while a student at the School for Moral Discipline.

Box and Folder List

Box	Folder	
1	1	William King, outgoing correspondence, 1820-1842
	2	Incoming correspondence, 1821-1849
	3	Shipping papers, *Alexander* (ship), 1810
	4	*Asia* (ship), 1813-1818
	5	*Ganges* (ship), 1811-1818
	6	*Osiris* (ship), 1800
	7	Miscellaneous personal business papers, 1813-1838
	8	Commissions, 1811-1822
	9	Land Claims, 1811, 1821
	10	Customs & Lighthouse accounts, 1834-1839
	11	French Indemnity Claims, 1834-1839
	12	Bath Bank, 1841-1846
	13	Deposition of John Ramsey re: William King's exports, 1829
		Minutes, Prudential Committee meeting, South Church, Bath, 1816
		Settlement of debt, George Long, 1817
	14	Miscellaneous: Samuel Leighton, resignation, 1817
		Deposition of William Chamberlain, 1831